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## Editorials

### THE SPIRIT OF INQUIRY

Is the spirit of inquiry out of place in religion? Is religious education, from the home and Sunday school to the college and theological school, essentially dogmatic? Are religious and secular education distinguished in that the former is a process of impartation by authority, the latter a process of learning to perceive and to judge and to act for oneself? Whole sections of the Christian church have said, "Yes," and the affirmative answer has been repeated by an eminent educator of our own day. But why this radical differentiation between the two fields of education? Is there not at the bottom of this distinction a confusion between authority as the right to demand obedience in action, and authority as the right to command assent to opinion or acceptance of doctrine? And is there not an assumption that because religion rightly maintains the former, therefore it affirms the latter, and that because science finds no place for the latter, neither is there place for the former in the ordinary business of life?

But from what field of human conduct can the right to command and the duty to obey be rightly excluded? Not from the family; not from the school; not from the army and navy; not from the state. Law as interpretative has been overshadowed in modern thought by law as the formula of sequence; and partly in consequence thereof we have fallen into a period of lawlessness. But no thoughtful man can regard this as other than a swing of the pendulum to the left that is disturbing the balance and imperiling the stability of society. Relations create obligations; in the realm of conduct it is often needful

that the many should follow, not their own judgment and wisdom, but the will of another. Authority in this sense belongs, not to religion, but to conduct. It might even be justly said to have its least place in religion, since religion is so largely a personal matter, and divine authority attests itself as authority ultimately by its appeal to the conscience of the individual.

On the other hand, by what reasoning can it be maintained that the right to think for one's self, open-eyed and open-minded, belongs to every realm save that of religion? Men differ in their ability to think; every man's right to think for himself is limited by his duty to recognize that in some realms of thought others are far more competent to reach sound conclusions than he himself, and that in this realm it is the part of wisdom to trust the judgment of experts more than his own. But is this true in religion only? Is it not equally true in politics, in economics, in biology and medicine and astronomy?

In truth, there is no man that is wholly free to *act*, unconstrained by authority, and over us all are the divine commands to which we must yield, or pay the penalty of disobedience. And equally there is no man who has not both the right and the duty in every realm to use his power of mind to the utmost with all diligence and with all possible clearness, responsible to God alone for his thinking. And the obligation to assist our thinking by the clearer thought of others, or to hold the mind in suspense because other and abler men have reached opinions different from those which commend themselves to us, belongs no more to religion than to politics, or science, or business life. If anywhere the open-minded spirit of inquiry is legitimately at home, it is so in religion.

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#### MOSAISM

Christianity grew out of Judaism. But Judaism was itself a distinct religion, the offspring of prophetism—that is, the movement and body of truth contributed by the Old Testament prophets, beginning with Amos. This movement of the prophets had its origin in what may be called, for lack of a better term, “preprophetism”—a movement extending through three centuries, beginning perhaps with